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FORMULA FOR FORCE OF MORTALITY.

Editor Analyst:

An essay of mine on "Methods of Interpolation applicable to the graduation of irregular series, such as tables of mortality, &c.," part of which appeared in the *Smithsonian Report* of 1873, contained among other things, at page 343 of that report, a demonstration of the formula

$$\mu_3 = \frac{8(y_2 - y_4) - (y_1 - y_5)}{12y_3},$$

where y_1, y_2 , &c., are the "numbers living" at any five consecutive birthdays, out of a certain number of persons born, and μ_3 is the "force of mortality" at the middle birthday. The same formula has since been published, with a different demonstration and notation, in an article by Mr. W. S. B. Woolhouse, in the *London Journal of the Institute of Actuaries and Assurance Magazine* for April, 1878, page 64. I wrote to the editor in the October following, stating my priority, and asking to have it mentioned in the *Journal*. This request has not been complied with up to July, 1879, the date of the latest number I have seen. The January 1879 number contains, at page 285, a laudatory reference to the formula, and the name of Mr. Woolhouse only is mentioned as its author. I ask leave therefore to put the facts on record, and remark further, that a copy of the *Smithsonian Report* referred to was sent to the editor of the *Journal* in 1875, so that he had no need to be in ignorance—if he was ignorant—of the existence of my work, in April, 1878.

E. L. DE FOREST.

Watertown, Conn., Jan. 8, 1880.

CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO PROBLEM 286.

Editor Analyst:

Problem 286 was proposed some years ago, in the *Educational Times*, and discussed thoroughly. Mr. Woolhouse made a solution the same as that by Mr. Adcock. Stephen Watson afterward made a solution obtaining the result $\frac{2}{5}$, which Mr. Woolhouse admitted was correct, and I believe was finally so admitted by all. (See *Educational Times* for Jan. 1870, June '70 and Sept. '71. The solution of Prob. 193, ANALYST, also solves this.

WALTER SIVERLY.

Oil City, Pa., Dec. 29, 1879.

[Because, in the denominator of the fraction which represents the req'd probability, the points through which the circles are supposed to be drawn